The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

No. 82, Vol. vii.] BELFAST, OCTOBER 1st, 1887. [For Gratuitous Circulation.

The Rev. J. C. Street begs to acknowledge receipt of the following amounts in aid of the gratuitous publication of the *Chronicle and Index*:—

A Friend, Newcastle-on-Tyne,	0	10	0
Mrs. Osler, Birmingham, -	0	5	0
Mr. Coysh, London,' - -	0	5	0

Further contributions are needed, and will be gladly acknowledged.

We regret to hear that our friend and colleague, the Rev. E. S. Anthony, has resigned his charge at Raloo, and that he is returning to England. He has done good work while in this country, and he will be greatly missed.

We are glad to offer a welcome to the Rev. Geo. W. Lewin, who has just been inducted as minister at Crumlin. We trust he may have a happy and a useful ministry.

The Rev. J. C. Street will commence his Sunday Evening Services on Sunday, October 2nd, and it is hoped he may have audiences as large and attentive as usual. His subjects for the next four Sundays are—

Oct. 2.—Our Message about God.
,, 9.—Our Beliefs about Man.
,, 16.—Our Longings after Holiness.
,, 23.—Our Hope of Immortality.

A reference to our advertising columns will shew that the Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association is just entering upon its sixteenth session, and that it has issued a programme of great interest and variety for the first half of the session. So useful has this association proved in the past, and so great an interest is always felt in its proceedings, that we do not for a moment doubt that the session just about commencing will prove attractive and useful. We hope its already large membership will be increased, and that great interest will be taken in the literary and scientific programme which has been issued by the committee.

The congregation and minister of Moneyrea have made great efforts for some time past to wipe off a troublesome debt upon their meeting-house, and they have followed up an active and successful canvass for funds with a very satisfactory bazaar. We have every reason to know that these efforts have accomplished their object, and we offer to our friends our warmest congratulations. Doubtless, they will make a definite announcement, which will gladden all those who have helped the good work.

The Rev. J. Wright, B.A., says:—"One thing there is, my friends, that is true in all places and at all times, namely, that the success of our missionary efforts—success, that is, in the sight of God, not in the sight of man—depends entirely on the spirit in which we undertake the work. We must have a religious faith deep-seated in our souls, and we must have a true love of our fellow men. Having these we must go to our work, as at the call of God himself, each able in his humble post of duty to say, 'the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, and he hath sent me to preach His gospel to the people.' All personal considerations cast aside, all petty distinctions of this world forgotten, all wranglings of sects and parties unheard, sent by the love of God to tell of His love to our perishing brethren, to those who are starving for want of fit spiritual

food, we must for this great cause go forth, prepared to labour in season and out of season, to spend and be spent, the mouth speaking from the full heart, God's spirit bearing witness with our spirit. And then the humblest labourer will never toil in vain."

HOW I LEFT ORTHODOXY.

"CALVINISM AND METHODISM—THEIR JOINT AND THEIR CONTRARY INFLUENCES UPON ME."

BY JAMES C. STREET.

No. 2.

"A still small voice spake unto me,
Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?"

* * * *

A second voice was at mine ear,
A little whisper, silver-clear,
A murmur, "Be of better cheer."

As from some blissful neighbourhood,
A notice faintly understood,
"I see the end, and know the good."

A little hint to solace woe,
A hint, a whisper, breathing low,
"I may not speak of what I know."

Like an Æolian harp that wakes
No certain air, but overtakes
Far thought with music that it makes:

Such seemed the whisper at my side:
"What is it that thou know'st sweet voice?" I cried,
"A hidden hope," the voice replied.

So heavenly-toned, that in that hour
From out my sullen heart a power
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower.

To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that speaks above,
And veileth love, itself is love.

And forth into the fields I went,
And nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

I wondered at the beauteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers:
You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

I wondered, while I paced along:
The woods were fill'd so full with song,
There seem'd no room for sense of wrong.

So variously seem'd all things wrought,
I marvell'd how the mind was brought,
To anchor by one gloomy thought;

And wherefore rather I make choice,
To commune with that barren voice,
Than him that said "rejoice! rejoice"!—*Tennyson.*

These words of Tennyson fitly introduce me to a period of restless questioning, when I was swayed to and fro by contending influences, and trying to find some solid ground on which I could rest.

The revolt which I had made against predestination by no means sundered my connection with Calvinism. I can see now that it *ought* to have done; for the doctrines of Calvin hold together in logical sequence, and if one of them be found untenable all the rest will go along with it. But this was a *later* discovery. At the time when I stood out as a protestor against a dogma which consigned, before their birth, multitudes to the torture of an endless hell, I by no means understood that I was leaving the inner circle of those who had found out and who vindicated the ways of God to man, I had escaped from the thraldom of a dogma which had horrified me, and which made me, as a boy, feel that it would have been far better if I had never been born, and if God himself had been dead; but still I was left in toils which it took me many years of anxiety, thought, and struggle to escape from.

Consider what my actual position was! I was in regular attendance at a Methodist Sunday School; I used to be at a prayer meeting on Sunday mornings at seven o'clock; and I never failed to be in my place at the Methodist Chapel twice every Sunday. The surroundings of Sunday were all those which earnest and devout Methodists brought, and the influence of their zeal and devotion was felt through every part of my being. But between the Sundays were six other days. I do not now remember whether, either in my few school days or my many days of work, I had during the week-time any special connection with Methodist influences. If I had, they must have been of a very slight and uninfluential character, for I can find no traces of them in my memory. But the chamber of memory, at this period, is by no means vacant. Its walls are painted over with pictures which still preserve their colouring, and with figures

which stand out sharp as sculptured lines. My mother's habit was, for a long time, out of love to my father's memory and devotion, to go with us to the Methodist Chapel; but it was easy to see that she was not satisfied with what she heard, though she responded to the life and warmth of the services. Evidently she could see flaws in the reasoning of the preacher, and as she followed the reading of the scriptures she put interpretations upon the passages which Methodism in its Arminian form would utterly repudiate. Sunday at this period, though a busy was not a happy day. Our religion did not bring us joy. We felt its power, and we bowed to its requirements, but we were not able to rejoice. Besides, we were in no clear and definite position. We were swayed by contradictory impulses, and struggling against adverse currents. The week's influences were not harmonious with those of Sunday. It seemed to me that this was the case with us all. I am sure it was the case with me. During the week-days, the subject of religion was never quite absent. No doubt I played and romped, and was as mischievous as other boys of my age, and in intervals of leisure from school or work no doubt I managed to burst through many restraints, and live as if there were no grim realities of religion to face and no dreadful hell to shun. But notwithstanding these fitful boyish freaks, these outbreaks into a sort of natural freedom, religion was the staple theme of my life. When I was at home I was from time to time surrounded by those friends of my mother's who one and all were Calvinists of the severest type. Life was certainly not lovely to their eyes. Severe, gloomy, and laborious, it was only endurable at all from the thought that it would soon be over, and that then they would enter upon predestined and eternal joys. They were a sad and mournful looking group, and took dark views of every thing about them. But they were earnest; and, so far as my recollection and judgment go, they were good men and women, genuine and sincere, ready to serve one another, and not slow even to help those whose future seemed appointed to be with the reprobate and lost. They regularly met for religious conversation and intercourse. They were all of the humbler class—builders, lacemakers, stockingloom weavers, confectioners, and such like. They had no rich men among them. They formed a little world of their own. One thing about them greatly struck me. They had but the slightest connection with any of the organized churches of the town. Most of the sects, no matter whether called Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, or Independent, were of the Arminian type; even the Independent ministers and people, the most rigid of them, did not come up to the standard of Calvin, and this little group of men and women could not, as a consequence, have intimate fellowship with them. But there was one little church in town, perhaps the very smallest, which treasured Calvin's institutes; which set forth, when it was able to hold its services, the high doctrines which my little group of Calvinists devoutly believed. It was supported mainly by a small band of the working classes, with a small sprinkling of shopkeepers, and one titled lady—always spoken of as Lady Lucy. As long as they were able, this little congregation secured the services of a minister; but it was difficult to find a suitable man, and at the same time a man who could live upon the small stipend which this congregation could pay. So they were often without a minister. During these periods, the pulpit was frequently occupied by the leader of the little group that I had often seen at my mother's house. But I never heard him preach there. These services were on Sundays, and on Sundays I was at the Methodist School and Chapel. But it was during the week-days that I knew most about the Calvinistic services. The preacher and teacher of the little assembly was a builder. He was a remarkable man in every respect. But three things I never forgot about him. His appearance was startling—a thickset, florid-faced man, with a nose of most extraordinary size and shape, and hands that were like sledge-hammers. Anyone who ever saw him once could never forget him as long as they lived. His preaching was a thing to be remembered for ever. His voice was like a

roar, and his hand came crashing down upon the bible or the pulpit as if he meant to crush it to atoms; the perspiration rolled from him in streams, and every now and then he was compelled to stop to dry up the mighty stream with his great red-cotton handkerchief. At such times his vast nose was swept from side to side of his face, and we boys who were present looked for that as one of the great sights of the occasion. But with all this we could not laugh, the man was in such downright earnest; his roar was ranting in its worst form, but his language was well considered, and his argument clear and cogent. We all felt that he was laying down the law with resistless force, and not one of us was capable of replying to him. It was to me a scene of fascination. The place of meeting was constructed by himself out of the upper and lower rooms of one of his own houses; and here, every Wednesday evening, he held forth to the elect few. I never saw more than thirty persons present, I think; but I never saw one who was not under the sway of this earnest preacher. Many a time I sat fascinated, as, like a great god of fate, he gathered up the bible evidences of the final salvation and perseverance of the saints, and then demonstrated from the same source that sinners, or rather those who were of old condemned to be damned, were in the web of destiny, and the devil, like an omnipotent spider, swept down upon them, and bore them into the fire of an eternal hell. There was a sense of satisfaction in all this to the preacher. He rejoiced in the lot of both. It was God's doing, and what God did was right. It always seemed to me, as I heard this preacher, that he was assured of his own safety, and felt not only a sense of joy in this knowledge, but also that thus God's righteousness was vindicated; but I also felt that he would, though awed and crushed, have been ready to be damned, if thus it was needful to establish the righteousness of God.

You will readily see how great an influence Calvinism thus presented would exercise over an impressionable and religious-minded boy. Though I had revolted against the idea of predestination, and felt that whatever else might be true this must be false, yet the stern, hard system of spiritual fatalism held me in some bondage still, and I had not yet learned to cry out, "Who will deliver me from the bondage of this death?"

As yet I had only taken one step; but, as the days passed on, I found that others were before me.

But my Methodist experiences were strong, and attractive too. The Sunday was, in many respects, a sharp contrast to my week-day life. The influences about me on these days were quite of a different character to those belonging to the week-days. The Sunday morning prayer meeting drew together a band of thirty or forty persons, young and old, who desired to consecrate the day to God. We were usually led by a kindly-faced and tender-hearted old gentleman, who seemed to overflow with love to all his fellow-men, but especially to children. All the boys drew near to him; and he used to speak to us, and pat our heads, and in every way make us feel how glad he was to see us. If ever we happened to cough he would be sure silently to reach us some piece of candy or a lozenge; and I am afraid we sometimes coughed for the sake of the sweety. For about an hour we alternately sang and prayed, and then we went home to prepare for the other services of the day. I never turn my mind back to those Sunday morning prayer meetings without a feeling of peace and pleasure. I dare say the prayers were of a very illiterate character, as they were uttered extemporaneously by uneducated men and women; but they seemed so genuine, so full of anxiety for the welfare of the sinner, so confident that God would help the sinner if only the sinner would let Him, that somehow I used to go away feeling that at all events every man had a chance, and that it was a great pity that man would defy God and prevent Him from bestowing salvation. But I concluded it was not God's fault, it was man's. In this I found that I had made secure my point against predestination.

As a Sunday School scholar I was brought in contact with teachers who were not very well educated, but who were intensely religious.

They undertook their duties with a view to the salvation of the souls of the children. These men and women seemed in some way, which troubled me not a little, to think we were all very bad—bad by nature, they used to say; but still they made us feel there was some way, or "plan" they called it, by which all this could be altered. I had difficulty in finding out what this plan was, and indeed never fully comprehended it until years later on, when to comprehend was finally to reject and repudiate it. But one thing was every day growing clear to me, and that was that these good teachers felt it necessary to impress three things strongly upon us, viz., that death was at hand; that judgment was inevitable; and that hell was the lot of the impenitent wicked. I noticed that when we were reading some things in class we were cheerful and happy enough, and that when we met our teachers outside the school they seemed gentle, friendly, light-hearted persons, but that whenever we got upon the topic of religion we were at once plunged into a region of feverish anxiety, and that we were instantly confronted with the three awful phantoms whose names I have mentioned. It was now forced in upon my mind that *death* was a terrible evil, that it was a great enemy, and that it came as an awful messenger. Many a time have I shuddered about it; and at night-time, when lying in my little bed, I could have shrieked out with the thought that it was changing into the grave, and that the dread avenger had come at last. Out of all this horror and fear I have long since emerged, and I can look with tranquil face upon that inevitable messenger who comes to us all, but *then* it was a continual terror to me. Our teachers would always talk to us about death, and when any fellow-scholar died the occasion was turned to the gloomiest account, and we felt that we were almost as badly off as the poor fellow who had received the grizzly messenger. Then the *judgment* was an appalling thought. We were familiar with a scene that occurred in our town two or three times a year, when the judges came in to try the prisoners. We had seen the stately processions again and again, and the insignia of the great office which these judges held. We knew that in some awful way these mysterious men had the power of life and death in their hands, and that often, after they had gone away, some poor wretches—men or women—were left to be hanged before assembled thousands of their fellow-creatures. We knew these judges came to try the prisoners, and there was about the Assizes something that always laid a hand of awe upon us. When we heard of the judgment after death, we naturally thought of a "great Assize," held somewhere in the skies, where the sheep and the goats were separated, and the judge pronounced the fatal and eternal word of doom; and this idea was strengthened and emphasized by frequent references to the parable of Jesus, and we were fascinated, as birds are said to be fascinated by the gaze of a serpent, by the horrors and judicial terrors of the scene. Teachers spoke to us in our classes, superintendents from their desk, and occasionally ministers who came to visit the school, and all dwelt upon this judgment, and urged us to prepare for it, telling us we could not escape from it. Sometimes they called it the judgment-seat of Christ, and sometimes they spoke of God as sitting upon the throne. I got confused at this time about the way in which the names of Christ and God were mixed up, and never could tell clearly who was meant until the name was actually pronounced. As I grew older I found that people themselves were confused, and got lost in substances and personalities until they could not think clearly on these matters. But whatever confusion prevailed respecting the persons of Christ and God there was none about a judgment, a separation of the bad from the good, a trial where there was no chance for the sinner and where the saint had no need to plead, and a judgment pronounced which determined the fate of all for ever. But the tremendous word *hell* was the mightiest that was used to influence our minds in the Sunday School. I did not then understand how supreme was the power of love—how it could subdue all fear, and could conquer the most rebellious hearts. This was not set forth. Not *love*, but *fear*—not *heaven*, but *hell*, was the agency employed to save our

souls. I had not heard very much about hell from my Calvinistic friends up to this time, except as an awful and endless place of torment for lost souls; they had not tried to describe it in my hearing, or to bring vividly before my mind what it was like; they had only referred to it as an actual place and condition. But my Methodist teachers seemed to think it necessary to enter into awful details. From them we heard about undying flames, sulphurous fumes, worms that never died, devils whose duty and delight it was to torture lost souls, and horrors too awful for the human mind to conceive. They dwelt upon these details until we used to shudder as we sat before them; and often when night and darkness came these horrors assumed appalling magnitude, and I, for one, was at times terrified and almost maddened.

Now I firmly believe that these Sunday School teachers were sincerely in earnest, and that the things they said were for our good; but I have long ago learned that it is a crying sin and shame to set such horrors before young children, and that their influence is altogether hurtful and obnoxious. However, it was amid these influences I lived during my Methodist Sunday School life, and I report faithfully the things I know.

But the services of the chapel, as we called it, only more fully amplified the teachings of the school. Here I found that the preachers fortified themselves, as my Calvinistic friends did, with what was called the authority of the scriptures, and cited texts and chapters in confirmation of their doctrines. I saw, even as a boy, that there was a grave difference in the teachings of the Calvinists and Methodists, and that they were equally earnest people; but what perplexed me was that they both appealed to the same authority, and both affirmed that its testimony was on their side. It is true that I noticed that these people quoted different parts of the bible, and were not in the habit, except sometimes for controversial purposes, of referring to the passages which were held in highest esteem by those who differed from them; but nevertheless I heard them equally refer to the bible as "the law and the testimony," as the "court of appeal," and as the "word of God." I was puzzled. But since that time I have found that however puzzling this phenomenon may be it is very usual. Men select their court of appeal, and then make it decide according to their own feelings and desires. I do not mean to say that they intentionally torture the scriptures out of their natural meaning, but that they do so unconsciously is beyond question or argument. The Methodist preachers certainly caught me on an impressionable side of my nature. I was in strong and stern, though boyish, revolt against the doctrine of predestination. I could not believe that God was so unfair that He would create us for eternity and give to some of us, perhaps the great majority, not even a single chance of happiness; it was far easier to me not to believe in God at all, and give up any idea of living after death. Certainly I could not, I would not, believe in the doctrine; I was simply revolted at it. On this side of my nature Methodism made a great appeal to me. It started with the assumption that we all had a chance; that salvation was possible to each and all; that there were appeals and invitations to us throughout the scriptures urgently calling us to the living waters, to the bread of life, to the rock of our salvation. Its affirmation was that God wanted us to be saved; that He strove with us; that He was long-suffering and forbearing; and that if at last we refused all offers and spurned all His appeals our damnation resulted from our own freewill, and God was in no sense to be blamed. I admit that even this did not satisfy me. I could not make it fit in with an idea of God that was gradually growing up within me. There seemed something wanting. About the whole thing there was a sense of feebleness and failure, and it distressed me to think that in the end there were multitudes who were to be lost. I quite understood that these people had had their chance; that God had not dealt arbitrarily with them, but had striven with them in vain, and that their final failure was due to themselves. But still I was met with the appalling fact that they were lost. I wondered many a time whether God was sorry; whether He would not continue to grieve over them even after they had been driven from His presence; and whether their misery would not in some way mar His happiness. In all this there were the beginnings of a new revolt. I did not know this then. It was only a little later on in my career that I understood this. At present I seemed to have found a way into a belief that men and women were not hopelessly condemned before they were born, but that God desired they should all be saved, and gave to every one a chance. Occasionally I felt sorry for God. He wished to save all, but many would not let Him. I could not reconcile

man's final resistance to His omnipotence, nor understand how He could rest with the sense of failure. But I heard so often that God was just as well as merciful, and that having laid down laws and ordinances which were essentially right, He could not depart from them, and that He was limited by His own laws. And so I tried to think it was all right though it seemed so wrong.

(To be continued).

Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association.

SIXTEENTH SESSION, 1887-88.

The Committee have the pleasure of announcing the following

PROGRAMME UNTIL CHRISTMAS 1887.

1887.			
Oct.	3—	Opening Soiree.	
„	10—	"Watchman, What of the Night?"	Mr. Alex. Bowman.
„	17—	"The Human Voice: Its Mechanism and Management Illustrated by Drawings and Demonstrations with the Laryngoscope,	Mr. Samuel Leighton.
„	24—	"Animal Mechanism," ..	Rev. W. Reynolds, B.A.
„	31—	"Has the Condition of the Working Classes Improved during the past Fifty Years?"	Discussion.
Nov.	7—	"Green and Orange," ..	Mr. John Cuming.
„	14—	"A Bit of Coal—been there,"	Rev. Jas. Rentoul.
„	21—	Short Original Papers, ..	Members and Friends.
„	28—	"Epitaphs,"	Rev. J. A. Kelly.
Dec.	5—	"The Resources of Civilization,"	Mons. Dubois.
„	12—	"Some Thoughts on Atheism,"	Mr. W. J. Sloane.
„	19—	Music and Readings, ..	Members and Friends.

The Meetings are held on Monday Evenings at Eight o'clock, in the Rosemary Street Schools.

Member's Subscription.—4s. per annum, which entitles to the use of the Library. Subscriptions for the Sixteenth Session are now due and should be paid to the Treasurer, D. Bulmer, 32, Queen Street, *as early as possible.*

The Library will be open at 1 p.m. on Sundays, and on every Monday Evening during the Session.

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Printed by JOHN A. MURPHY, 16, Howard Street, for the Unitarian Society, and Published at their Depository, 16, Queen's Arcade, Belfast.